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AUTHOR Buchmiller, Archie A.
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ABSTRACT

This paper briefly examines the nature of provisions for citizen participation in selected federal programs. Requirements for citizen involvement are discussed under three major categories: (1) organization and membership requirements, (2) duties and responsibilities, and (3) responsibilities of state and local agencies to accommodate citizen input. The programs examined in this analysis are assumed to be representative of other federal programs in respect to such provisions. (Author/MLF)

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by

Archie A. Buchmiller, Ph.D.

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Citizen Participation in Program Operations
Under Selected Federal Education Programs

Citizen participation in state and local government has been regarded as a necessary condition for effective decisionmaking. The complexity and interdependent linkages between institutions and all levels of governance have tended to limit access to the decisonmaking processes at all levels.

A trend to share increased educational decisionmaking and power with citizens and local organizations can be found, since the late 1960s, in federal elementary and secondary education programs through mechanisms such as advisory councils, public hearings on proposed applications and grants, and procedures for the redress of complaints. The prescription for such involvement is more pronounced under the Education Amendments of 1978 (Public Law 95-561) where provisions have been made for stronger roles to advise officials, to monitor and evaluate projects and programs, and to provide citizens with a greater share of the decisionmaking and operating responsibilities.

Many of the causes for increased citizen interest in involvement in educational affairs precede the current wave of militant taxpayers who primarily want to reduce public expenditures and taxes. There is little question that some of the concerns of citizens can be attributed to high costs, but other factors, such as the demands of special interest groups, teacher unionism, and the quest for political involvement by special interest groups, are also causes on their own.

This paper briefly examines the nature of provisions in selected federal programs, including the Vocational Education Act of 1973 and subsequent amendments (P.L. 94-482), Library Resources and Educational Innovation (P.L. 93-380), Education of all Handicapped Act (P.L. 94-142), Bilingual Education (Title VII, P.L. 93-380), and Emergency School Assistance Act (P.L. 92-318). Requirements for citizen involvement will be discussed under three major categories: 1) organization and membership requirements, 2) duties and responsibilities, and 3) responsibilities of state and local agencies to accommodate citizen input. The programs examined in this analysis are assumed to be representative of other federal programs in respect to such provisions.

Organization and Membership Requirements

Citizen participation in planning, operating, monitoring, and evaluating federal programs is generally provided through mechanisms such as citizen panels and advisory councils, required public hearings on applications and grants, and modified quasi-administrative responsibilities which require school officials to consult with public citizens, professionals, and parents in planning, preparing applications, operating, and reporting on programs. Increasingly, some mix of all of these elements is present to give citizens a partnership role with local officials.

Citizen advisory councils, committees, or panels at the state level are usually appointed by the governor or the state agency head responsible for the administration of a program. Those at the local level are either appointed by local officials or elected by citizens themselves, as is the case in Title I ESEA, which requires that parents be permitted to select their own representatives on committees, elect their own officers, and adopt procedures which are appropriate and effective in increasing parent participation.

Often, as is the case in the Education Amendments of 1978, the legislation itself contains prescriptive requirements. However, the *Federal Register* is used as the primary vehicle to explicate rules and regulations which state and local officials must follow in the appointment of citizens and to assure their meaningful and appropriate involvement in program operations. Frequently, these regulations relate to public hearings, receipt of comments and suggestions from the public, assuring citizen access to information, and adjudication of complaints and grievances. Invariably, there is a requirement on the part of advisory committees to consult with public officials along with the reciprocal requirement that public officials consider the suggestions made by advisory council members as well as other parents, teachers, and pupils.

The citizen membership conditions generally require the group to be representative of the community the program is to serve. In some cases, provisions require participation by specific types of persons, such as administrators of special education programs, psychologists, or experts from the field of communications and media resources. Leadership is usually vested in a chairperson designated by the agency administering the program, such as Title IV, P.L. 93-380, or permits advisory panels to elect and designate their own officers as is the case with Title I ESEA parent advisory councils.

Federal programs provide for a variety of methods for appointing, organizing, and carrying out citizen responsibilities. Requirements are usually most explicit in regard to membership, conducting evaluation studies, advising and counseling with local officials, and making reports directly to federal officials or to the general public. Generally, constituted citizen bodies are required to hold at least one public meeting or hearing a year. Several federal programs enable advisory councils to employ staff to assist them in carrying out their responsibilities, and operating costs are usually borne by the public agency out of allocations provided under the law.

Duties and Responsibilities

The purpose of citizen advisory bodies generally specifies an advisory and consulting role to duly elected and appointed school officials. Most frequently, this role is intended to assist in planning, monitoring, operating, and evaluating programs. Citizen panels may also be responsible for conducting public hearings on applications and operations, not only to aid in their advising and consulting role but also to give other citizens access and opportunity to influence decisions and have a voice in determining the kind of programs and services that will be provided to the beneficiaries of the program.

In several programs, a watchdog function is provided by requiring citizen panels to monitor operations and advise and consult with local officials on the establishment of policies and priorities and the administration of the program. Citizen advisory structures may be charged with the responsibility to encourage a broader public and parent involvement in program development, operation, and evaluation. Recent reauthorizations of federal legislation also appear to increase the role of citizen panels in evaluating programs and reporting independently to federal officials as well as to assume a training role to increase the effectiveness of parent and citizen participation. These responsibilities are intended to insure that programs and services are relevant to the needs of the persons or groups to whom the services are directed and to involve persons who are affected by the decisions to be made.

Responsibilities of the Educational Agency

State and local education officials must fulfill both the spirit and the letter of the law in respect to involving citizens in the application for funds and operation of programs. In some cases where involvement, procedures, or operations do not serve recipients well or meet provisions of the law or regulations, procedures are established whereby complaints, allegations, and grievances can be resolved, and state or federal officials may be called upon to review and judiciously make changes which will assure compliance with rules and regulations.

Public officials are required, almost without exception, to provide for some kind of an assurance that citizen panels will be appointed and will operate as required and that the mandate to consult with and involve them in operating and improving programs is carried out. State and local educational agencies are generally required to provide or make available to citizens information that is necessary to carry out their responsibilities and to report on changes or modifications made in programs which are the result of consulting with advisory panels and public citizens. It appears that citizen panels or boards will increasingly share responsibility with local officials in planning and identifying needs, evaluating programs, conducting hearings or other public comment, and monitoring operations to see that the established procedures reach the intended client groups with the programs and that services are delivered as stipulated in the agency's approved application for funds.

Summary

The trend to enlarge and enhance the role of citizens and formal advisory panels, committees, or boards of such citizens in the operation of federal programs is enhanced in recent legislation. Citizen involvement is an essential component of public accountability requirements in federal programs and may in part be attributed to the alleged credibility gap between local school officials and the public. Citizen involvement also is desirable in programs and services which affect their lives and welfare and help develop skills that will enable them to participate more effectively in community activities. Citizen participation in decisionmaking seeks to prevent or correct false directions and abuses as well as to assure that appropriate benefits reach those requiring assistance.

Appendix

Characteristics of Citizen Involvement in Federal Programs

Program	Involvement Structures	Membership Requirements	Responsibilities/Duties	Agency Responsibilities
Education of the Handicapped P.L. 94-142	State advisory panel Public hearings Public comment on proposals Consultation	Handicapped representatives Teachers, administrators, parents State and local officials Special education administrators	Advise on unmet needs Publicly comment on plan, rules, and regulations Assist state agency in reporting and evaluating programs	Appoint panel Pay advisory panel expenses Report changes on advisory panel comments Consult with handicapped persons Hold hearings Adjudicate complaints Provide services
Educationally Disadvantaged Title I ESEA	Local school advisory councils Intermediate and district advisory councils	Parents in project areas Citizens in project areas Selection of persons by parents	Provide advice on annual application Advise on operations and evaluations Monitor operations Help Title I parents participate and acquire skills	Consult with advisory councils Provide information and parent training Publish names of members Involve parents with programs Pay expenses Comment on advisory council recommendations

Library Resources and Innovation Title IV, P.L. 93-380	State advisory council Public hearings	Persons representative of community resources Representatives of elementary/secondary schools Representatives of higher education Representatives of special fields	Advise on annual applications, planning, and administration Evaluate programs Prepare annual reports Conduct public meetings Employ staff	Appoint state advisory council Provide services to council Consult with council Comment on advisory council annual evaluation
Vocational Education P.L. 94-482	State advisory committee Local advisory committees Public hearings	Representatives of business, industry, labor, and the public	Advise state board on five-year plan Evaluate programs and services annually Prepare reports to USOE Identify manpower needs	Provide assistance Conduct public hearings Consult with individuals on plans Provide information
Bilingual Education Title VII, P.L. 93-380	Consultation with parents, teachers, and students Consultation with the public Community advisory committees	Limited English speaking persons Teachers Parents Students Interested persons in area to be served	Consult with local officials on administration and operations Observe programs Participate in operations	Appoint committee Provide committee with opportunities to observe operations Provide mechanisms for committee to evaluate programs
Emergency School Assistance Act P.L. 92-318	Districtwide advisory committee Student advisory committees Public hearings Consultation with parents, teachers, and students	District residence Equal numbers of minority groups Representatives of non-minority groups	Identify problems and needs Review and comment on applications Comment on administration Select student non-minority members	Hold public hearings on applications Consult with advisory committee monthly Publish names of committee members

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